

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER MIGNON L. CLYBURN
APPROVING IN PART AND DISSENTING IN PART**

Re: *Connect America Fund*, WC Docket No. 10-90

The economic and social challenges facing many living on Tribal lands is widely known. Chronic diseases and poverty rates are far above average and telephone, electricity, and broadband penetration is far below average. Connectivity access can help spur economic development and improve access to healthcare and education, which is why I find many parts of this item particularly frustrating.

The reality is that the lack of robust broadband access on Tribal lands is a multifaceted problem. Carriers serving Tribal lands must contend with additional costs and clear many hurdles before providing service. Unclear property rights, multiple approval requirements from governmental and non-governmental entities, and lower than average population density all contribute to costly and slow broadband buildout. This is why I am persuaded that we need to give carriers serving Tribal lands additional funding flexibility to meet the needs of Tribal consumers, and it is why I support raising the operating expenditures limitation for carriers primarily serving Tribal households. Since this item has unfortunately languished for so long, I also asked for language making clear that such relief was retroactive to January 1 of 2017.

In sum, this item should have gone further. We could have comprehensively addressed not only the Tribal Broadband Factor and operational expenditure limitations, but sought comment on additional incentives for Tribal broadband deployment, removing barriers to infrastructure deployment on Tribal lands, and improving Tribal Lifeline. We should not have tied the relief to the deployment levels on Tribal lands which now means some carriers that provide service to Tribal lands will not receive relief. This represents a significant departure from the Chairman's original proposal which extended support to all carriers that serve Tribal lands.

I supported this aspect of the original proposal then, and I continue to support it now. The purpose of this Order should be about increasing the amount of operating costs that carriers serving Tribal lands can recover from the USF - recognizing that they are likely to have higher costs than carriers not serving Tribal lands. Operating cost involves ongoing expenses for sustainable level of service offerings. Excluding some carriers from this relief, despite a finding that the operating costs are higher on Tribal lands, does not promote fully a rapid and sustainable broadband service deployment on these lands.

As we remember the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., who fought tirelessly for improving economic conditions for those living in poverty this week, not taking advantage of every opportunity to help those in need on Tribal lands is particularly disappointing.

In short, I approve in part, because we have taken a first step towards improving Tribal connectivity, but I dissent in part because we could and should have done far more.